UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/SR.23
8 April 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 23rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 3 April 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland)

CONTENTS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document E/CN.4/2002/SR.23 /Add.1.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Commission at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.02-12256 (E) 050402 080402

CONTENTS (continued)

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF PERU

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CONGO

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

(a) QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS (continued)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION (agenda item 3) (continued)

1. The CHAIRPERSON drew the Commission's attention to the revised timetable recommended by the Bureau, which was appended to the order of the day. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Commission wished to adopt that timetable.

2. It was so decided.

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

3. Mr. PIOT (Executive Director, UNAIDS) said that efforts to promote human rights and eliminate AIDS went hand in hand. The High Commissioner and her Office had been in the forefront of the global response to the human rights dimension of the AIDS crisis and cooperation between the human rights bodies and UNAIDS had contributed greatly to United Nations efforts to combat that epidemic, efforts which he hoped would be intensified. More than 60 million people worldwide were infected with HIV/AIDS and 20 million had died. HIV/AIDS was the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth cause of death globally. Life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa had been reduced from 62 to 47 years.

4. There were, however, some examples of successful responses on the part of communities which had organized to fight the epidemic, from gay communities in high-income countries to communities in Uganda and Zambia to sex workers everywhere. Civil society must be involved in developing effective responses, especially when dealing with young people and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Communities affected by AIDS became the victims of a vicious cycle of growing poverty and marginalization, and one of the most important lessons learned was the link between human rights protection and the ability of communities to organize and reduce the impact of the epidemic. When human rights were protected, the most important group, those living with HIV, were less fearful of disclosing their status and that gave them a greater capacity to organize and contribute to the response.

5. The international human rights framework applicable to HIV/AIDS had been strengthened in the past year by general comment 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to the highest obtainable standard of health. The General Assembly, at its special session on AIDS in June 2001, had also adopted unanimously a Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS which stated that human rights and fundamental freedoms were essential for reducing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and recognized that respect for the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS was a key factor in responding effectively to the epidemic. Commission resolution No. 2001/33, on access to medication in the context of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, stressed that access to HIV medication was a fundamental component of the right to the highest attainable standard of health. Furthermore, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Declaration at Doha stressed the need for the Trade Related Aspects of International Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement to be interpreted as supporting the right of WTO members to promote public health and access to medicines.

6. Nevertheless, access to treatment remained unequal and the international community had a responsibility to take advantage of new mechanisms, such as differential pricing and licensing, to protect the profits of the pharmaceutical industry and thus ensure continued research and also make new medicines available and affordable in a non-discriminatory manner. Significant progress had already been made in expanding access to HIV/AIDS treatment: the price of triple antiretroviral therapy, for example, had dropped from approximately US$ 12,000 to as low as US$ 350 in the poorest countries. Even that figure, however, remained out of reach for the majority of people in the most severely affected countries and the Governments of both developed and developing countries must commit more funds to purchasing medicines and ensuring that they reached those in greatest need. The establishment of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria had signalled a new decisiveness in international efforts and would help countries offer affordable treatment and comprehensive care and support in parallel with prevention programmes.

7. The human rights of those suffering from HIV/AIDS must be enforced and treatment policies in many countries recognized the right to health and to access to HIV/AIDS treatment. Brazil, for example, had guaranteed universal access to antiretroviral medications in 1996 and hospital admissions had since dropped by 80 per cent while AIDS mortality rates had fallen by 50 per cent, resulting in major savings for the health-care system. Governments and the international community must follow such examples, implement the relevant resolutions and promote the prevention of and health care for HIV/AIDS.

8. UNAIDS would continue to provide countries with technical and financial assistance in integrating human rights issues into their national HIV/AIDS strategic plans. In many countries, often in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), it had supported training on HIV-related human rights for community AIDS organizations, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political leaders, national programme managers, people living with HIV/AIDS and legislatures. It had also supported national human rights capacity-building, which was critical in guaranteeing HIV-related rights, including the right to health, in countries such as Ghana, South Africa and India.

9. Actions at the global and national levels by all actors - United Nations, Governments and civil society - provided support for individuals and organizations and the list of successful human rights activism and constructive litigation had grown impressively across the world. UNAIDS would work energetically to ensure continued progress in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and to develop further the human rights aspects of the campaign.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK

10. Mr. MØLLER (Denmark), having stressed his strong personal commitment to human rights and the prominence of human rights in his Government's programme of action, said that a democratic society based on the rule of law was the best guarantee of continued development of society. The right to development thus represented a dynamic right, which could become an efficient tool in mainstreaming human rights into the development process.

11. His Government's official development assistance (ODA) was proportionately the highest of any donor country and well above the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Its overall objective was the eradication of poverty, which deprived human beings of the possibility to develop their inherent skills, and it also aimed at promoting liberal and fair trade, integrating the developing countries into the world economy, furthering women's role in development and encouraging democracy based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. Good governance should go hand-in-hand with increased ODA. In that connection, he welcomed the concluding document of the recent International Conference on Financing for Development.

12. Turning to the Commission's impressive agenda, he said that his delegation believed it could make a special contribution in the areas of the fight against torture and the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples. He welcomed the contribution of the Commission to the establishment of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which would shortly hold its first annual session. He hoped that there would be progress on the draft optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which would provide for a global system of visits to places of detention.

13. The worldwide struggle against racism was also an urgent issue and his Government welcomed the final document of the Durban Conference, particularly the provisions relating to the elaboration of an international convention to protect the rights of the disabled. He noted that the General Assembly had established an ad hoc committee to look into the matter.

14. His Government remained committed to the worldwide struggle against international terrorism but such activities must take place within the context of respect for human rights. Free societies, in combating terrorism, must not lose sight of their own fundamental freedoms. In the context of armed conflicts, foreign occupation and the resistance thereto must both respect international humanitarian law in all circumstances and the current situation in the Middle East was a deplorable one. Both parties had a responsibility to stop the violence and to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

15. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights put it, everyone had a right to take part in the Government of his country and that right was at the core of any society that respected the dignity of its citizens. Any election result must therefore reflect the true will of the people. If it did not, as in the case of Zimbabwe, relations with his Government would of course be adversely affected.

16. An essential factor in promoting the international protection of human rights was the commitment of all States to cooperate constructively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms. The creation of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had been a breakthrough in international efforts to protect human rights and it was important that all States should support OHCHR. Constructive dialogue was essential between OHCHR, Governments, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission and their mechanisms. He congratulated the current High Commissioner on having set a new standard for dialogue aimed at promoting the implementation of human rights. It was a regrettable fact, however, that the special rapporteurs of the Commission were all too often refused entry into certain States and thus were not always able to provide the Commission with a

balanced picture of the human rights situation on the ground. In the last analysis, however, that worked against the State in question, which might not receive the international assistance it needed. All States should cooperate fully with the Commission's special rapporteurs.

17. NGOs were also essential supporters of the human rights mechanisms and made an indispensable contribution to the work of the Commission. They represented civil society, the victims of human rights violations and human rights defenders. They provided valuable information on the human rights situation in countries, had earned their place in the Commission and deserved the full attention of its members.

18. Turning to the working methods of the Commission, he stressed that dialogue, the search for broad consensus and respect for minority opinions were at the core of any democratic process but pointed out that the task of the Commission was to measure actual performance against the standards which States had voluntarily undertaken to observe. That process, conducted in a constructive manner, could not reasonably be called confrontational.

19. Regarding the pledge made by the Secretary-General to move the Organization towards a culture of prevention, he stressed the key role to be played by respect for human rights. His Government would continue to work energetically for the advancement of human rights for all because a lack of respect for human rights often led to conflict, totalitarianism or civil war.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

20. Mr. SUAREZ DEL TORO RIVERO (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that efforts to promote increased security throughout the world must take place within the context of internationally recognized human rights guarantees. The mission of the Federation and its minister societies was to help the victims of all forms of violence and disaster. In 1999, the Federation had pledged itself to protect vulnerable persons and had adopted a concrete plan of action embodied in its Strategy 2010. That Strategy was closely linked to the promotion of human rights, which influenced all the Federation's works. It advocated the indivisibility of human rights and welcomed the progress made by the international community in that area. Nevertheless, under-development in many regions of the world continued to hinder the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the international community should redouble its efforts to promote development and must place the fight against extreme poverty at the top of its agenda. Many national societies had requested that "Poverty and vulnerability" be included in the agenda for the next International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.

21. The 178 national societies entered into agreements with their respective Governments to assist the most vulnerable sectors of the population and played a role at both the local and - through the Federation - international levels. Because of its capacity to establish links between all sectors of society and at all levels, the Federation should be accepted as an irreplaceable point of reference in humanitarian debates and practices. One of its priorities was to foster more active cooperation with other international organizations, including the Commission, to promote and

protect the rights of the most vulnerable. It sought to promote fresh debate and innovative solutions based on the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

22. As part of its Strategy 2010, the Federation was working to promote tolerance and cultural diversity and combat discrimination at the local and national levels. It was also active in the area of health on issues such as primary care, access to basic drugs, water, food safety and preventable disease and combating discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers. The Federation and its national societies also worked to protect the rights and meet the needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants and at increasing awareness at the local and national level of international humanitarian law.

23. The traditional focus of Red Cross and Red Crescent activities had been to assist the victims of disasters, whose needs lay at the heart of national society concern. Emphasis had therefore been placed on efforts to resolve human problems before, during and after disaster struck. The Federation was currently compiling and analysing information on the status of international disaster response law with a view to pinpointing shortcomings. It was also working on a code of conduct for development cooperation and was participating in the Sphere Project (Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and Interaction), which had developed a Humanitarian Charter And Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

24. A range of national society programmes had been created to promote human rights in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina ("Friendship without Borders") and Colombia ("PACO- Peace, Action and Coexistence"). An association had also been established between the National Societies in the Philippines and Macao, to protect migrant workers in the latter territory.

25. Intolerance and discrimination had to be addressed by both global and local action. The Federation was a global network with 100 million volunteers and the capacity to help analyse the causes in each country, at all levels. Governments should be encouraged to take national debate to rural areas where problems were often more acute. Efforts would be made to strengthen cooperation at the national and international levels to promote tolerance, fight discrimination and foster respect for cultural diversity, which would allow the Federation to start planning how to focus on the protection of human dignity at the next International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, to be held in Geneva in 2003. The Federation was also working with NGOs and members of the business community to promote economic, social and cultural rights.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF PERU

26. Ms. BLONDET (Peru) having expressed her Government's regret that the High Commissioner for Human Rights was not seeking an extension of her mandate, said that the promotion and protection of human rights was one of the pillars of her Government's policy. The restoration of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the freedom to elect and renew authorities and freedom of expression, together with other fundamental rights, had generated an environment that made it easier for the State to meet its obligations under the universal system of human rights protection. The process of restoring democracy was not yet

complete, but the people of Peru and their political leaders were convinced that it was possible to achieve their goal. Independent observers had recognized that the presidential elections of April 2001 had been free and transparent. The new Government was in the process of building a future in which development went hand in hand with full respect for democracy and fundamental rights.

27. In July 2001, on the initiative of President Toledo, the country's members of the Andean Community had adopted the Machu Picchu Declaration on Democracy, the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the War against Poverty, highlighting the interrelationship and mutual involvement that existed among democracy, human rights, peace, social development, and the war on poverty, and the commitment of the States to respect those rights. In the same constructive spirit, her delegation would submit to the Commission a draft resolution on the right to democracy.

28. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been established to investigate the human rights violations committed between 1980 and 2000 by both terrorist groups and State agents, and to propose initiatives to promote peace and harmony among Peruvians. A National Commission for the Study and Implementation of International Humanitarian Law had also been established. Peru had ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and her Government considered the establishment of such a court to be a landmark in the gradual strengthening of the international system of human rights protection. Peru had also ratified a number of other international human rights instruments.

29. Her delegation was in favour of setting up an inter-sessional open-ended working group to study the possibility of preparing an international convention against enforced disappearances. It welcomed the activities of the working group on the draft optional protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman, Cruel or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and was able to support the proposed text.

30. Her Government was doing its utmost to promote development and equal opportunity for the indigenous peoples of Peru. In those efforts, care was being taken to recognize and respect the ethnic and cultural identity of those peoples and to strengthen their forms of organization and their valuable contribution to economic, social and cultural development. It was no coincidence that Peruvians chaired two working groups involved in indigenous rights. Her Government was also committed to implementing the outcomes of the Durban Conference.

31. Lastly, she extended an open invitation to all special rapporteurs and other mechanisms of the Commission to visit Peru, so that they could bear witness to the substantial advances made in meeting the country's human rights obligations.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CONGO

32. Mr. ADADA (Congo), having paid tribute to the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and expressed his Government's regret at her decision not to seek a renewal of her mandate, said that, given the serious deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, the Commission was duty-bound to investigate the issue and to find a solution which would enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination and put an end to the conflict which had been devastating the region for so long.

33. The year 2001 had been marked by two major events, the Durban Conference and the terrorist attacks of 11 September on the United States of America. The Durban Conference had produced some useful results in that it had, for the first time, recognized the injustices of the slave trade and apartheid as crimes against humanity. In contrast, the terrorist attacks had showed the extent to which terrorism was a flagrant violation of human rights which should be eradicated at all costs. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on counter-terrorism, his Government had begun reinforcing internal security and increasing international cooperation in that area. A committee had been set up to study eligibility for refugee status which could refuse or withdraw refugee status from those suspected of having been involved in terrorist or other acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.

34. Although violence must be combated in all its forms, efforts must also be made to limit its causes by, for example, implementing the rights to development and self-determination, ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of women and offering full enjoyment of all human rights. The right to development was a particular case in point as it was no secret that extreme poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance were among the causes of violence. The right to development was a fundamental right and its realization was one of the major concerns of his Government. A strategy had been put in place to tackle the problems of economic underdevelopment, particularly in the agricultural and industrial sectors, the lack of access to credit, the worsening unemployment situation and the inadequacy of infrastructures to support development.

35. True development involved the participation of everyone in society, including women, who should enjoy the same rights as men so as to participate fully in the economic and social progress of their countries. As part of its fight against poverty, therefore, his Government was ensuring universal access to education for girls and promoting the integration of women into all areas of production.

36. It was vital that economic, social and cultural rights should continue to benefit from the same attention as civil and political rights within the Commission, since poverty attenuated all rights, but economic rights could not be guaranteed without civil rights. Consequently, as part of the project "Justice and Human Rights" set up with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) his Government was endeavouring to consolidate the rule of law by boosting the profile and improving the operational capacity of the judiciary through the restoration of its buildings and the introduction of training courses for judges.

37. The President of the Republic was sparing no effort to restore democratic institutions following the interruption of the democratic process by the various civil wars that had occurred since 1993. For example, in November/December 1999, the Government and the rebel factions had agreed on a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and, in March 2001, an open national dialogue had been initiated which had laid the foundations for national reconciliation and a lasting solution to the crisis.

38. In January 2002, a referendum had been held which had resulted in the adoption of the new constitution, based on the principles of pluralist democracy and the separation of powers. That had been followed by the presidential election on 10 March 2002, won by

President Sassou Nguesso, an election which had been open to national and international observers and had taken place in an atmosphere of calm and transparency. The next phase of the process would be the general election on 12 May 2002 and local elections scheduled for 9 June.

39. He appealed to the international community to continue supporting that important process which would make it possible for his country to regain its place among the pluralist democratic nations of the world.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING:

(a) QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS

(agenda item 9) (continued) (E/CN.4/2002/3, 4, 9, 10, 33-40, 41 and Add.1, 42-49, 124, 144, 149-151 and 156-158; E/CN.4/2002/NGO/14, 36, 52, 54-57, 65, 91, 97, 101, 110, 143, 147, 153, 154, 159, 170-176 and 178)

40. Mr. COPITHORNE (Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran), introducing his last report (E/CN.4/2002/42), said that, despite evidence that the incorporation of human rights values into Iranian society was proceeding at an accelerating rate, the implementation of such rights by the Government continued to lag behind public expectations. The central struggle in Iran was between the elected and unelected holders of power. The latter were clearly still in control and the will of the people continued to be frustrated. Powerful elites continued to use violence to confront those they deemed to be enemies of the State or religion.

41. Journalists, student activists and other individuals who advocated a peaceful change to the system continued to be detained in poor conditions, and were often subjected to abuse. Suspicious deaths and executions continued to be reported, sometimes involving ethnic minorities such as the Kurds. The legal profession continued to face intimidation; one prominent defender of human rights activists had recently been sentenced by a military court to five years in prison and 70 lashes. The Azeri language had allegedly been banned from use in a provincial newspaper and in the city of Tabriz, which was mainly Azeri-speaking. Much of the Majilis legislation by reformist elements had been rejected, including initiatives to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls, which currently stood at nine years.

42. Lastly, the head of the judiciary had reportedly declared that torture continued to be widespread on the premises of the various security agencies. The Majilis had recently passed draft legislation to ban the use of torture and it would be interesting to see whether it would be approved.

43. Ms. KEITA-BOCOUM (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi), introducing her report (E/CN.4/2002/49) said that it was based on the findings of a mission to Burundi undertaken in late 2001, during which she had interviewed a number of prominent people in various fields and had visited some of the most affected areas, including refugee camps. The first part of the report addressed the political, economic and social situation in Burundi, and focused in particular on developments in the peace process. The political situation

was characterized by the adoption of a new constitution and the establishment of a new transitional Government and Parliament, which had received support from the international community. However, during the period under consideration, no ceasefire or cessation of hostilities had occurred.

44. Significant efforts had been made since the signing of the 2001 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement on Burundi, including an initiative to address the issue of prisoners. A meeting had recently been held in Geneva to discuss funding for the campaign against HIV/AIDS and debt relief in Burundi and the conclusions had been promising.

45. However, the climate of insecurity remained a matter of serious concern. In Bujumbura rural and in the north and east of the country, heavy fighting continued to take place between the army and rebel groups. The cycle of violence would not stop unless both parties were able to participate in negotiations.

46. The question of impunity and the report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the events of 1993 continued to be a matter of concern for some members of the ruling class in Burundi. Security was also compromised by a growing crime rate, including murder. The economic and social situation was deplorable, although cases of malnutrition and malaria were declining.

47. The second part of the report addressed the human rights situation, which had not improved. The escalation in violence had had an adverse effect and even young children were being drawn into the conflict. The civilian population was being forced to become displaced, and very few refugees had yet returned. The situation of women, children and the Batwa minority remained difficult. There had, however, been some improvements in the field of justice. It was hoped that the OHCHR office in Bujumbura would play a greater role in improving the situation. The most significant advance so far in the area of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law was the creation of a consultation forum involving NGOs and relevant associations.

48. The third and fourth parts of the report contained observations and recommendations to the parties to the conflict, the authorities in Burundi and the international community. Mediation had made some progress but further efforts were needed to bring still hostile groups to the negotiating table. The Government and the armed groups must avoid any intemperate speech that would damage the efforts that had already been made and must respect human rights and international humanitarian law, halting all violence against civilians.

49. The Government and the international community should endeavour to implement the Arusha Agreement and to create suitable conditions for the return of refugees. The Government should not recruit any more peace guardians or other civilian self-defence forces. It must make further efforts to protect the rights of women and children and to encourage women to participate in decision-making. The integration of the tradition of the Bashingantahe ("wise men") should be examined and considered.

50. She thanked the international community for its support and appealed to donors to continue to support humanitarian action and assistance to development. The international community should increase its role in monitoring the human rights situation, strengthening the judiciary and the rule of law and fostering all measures to promote and protect human rights, a prerequisite for peace. Such support would lead to national capacity-building in those areas and would lead to the creation of a national human rights institution.

51. The Secretary-General of the OAU had recently invited three representatives of the rebel group Palipehutu-FNL to become involved in the peace process, and such initiatives should be encouraged, provided that they gave rise to a sincere commitment. War could no longer serve as a pretext for injustice and human rights violations. Burundi had signed almost all the international human rights instruments and should endeavour to implement them.

52. Mr. NAHAYO (Burundi) said his Government had taken note of the comments made in the Special Representative's report (E/CN.4/2002/49), and would endeavour to act upon them. Despite the fact that Burundi had been engulfed in a civil war since 1993, making it difficult to guarantee fundamental human rights, the transitional Government was doing its utmost to protect the population from the unacceptable effects of war. Its priority was to find a way of ending the war through dialogue with the rebel forces, even though the latter were seemingly unwilling to participate.

53. Investigations would be carried out into the alleged violations of human rights by state agents and steps would be taken to punish any wrongdoers. His Government would continue to conduct human rights education programmes, and would endeavour to establish a National Human Rights Commission, involving members of civil society. It counted on the support of the international community to achieve its objectives.

The public part of the meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.